

# News from Ed Markey

**United States Congress**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **UNSCREENED CARGO CONTINUES TO THREATEN AMERICA'S PASSENGER AIRPLANES**

**Washington, DC:** Representative Edward J. Markey (D-MA), a senior Member of the Select Committee on Homeland Security, released the following statement reacting to the security recommendations of the Aviation Security Advisory Committee to the Transportation Security Administration today and the signing of the Homeland Security Appropriations Bill by President Bush.

"I want to thank you all for coming, especially Rep. Chris Shays and those who are up here with us representing the pilots and flight attendants of America. These men and women are the stewards of America's passenger plane and cargo plane infrastructure. They are also the patriots who continued to fly after September 11 – helping our country to return to normalcy. But today they are the patriots, who like Paul Revere, are warning all of us of the gaping loophole that continues to exist in our passenger plane system.

Today, President Bush will sign a flawed Homeland Security spending bill that does not include a provision to screen all cargo placed on America's passenger planes – a provision that Chris Shays and I passed by an overwhelming vote of 347-74 on the House Floor. Also, the Transportation Security Administration's Aviation Security Advisory Committee has made recommendations, which can be considered nothing more than a desire to keep the status quo.

It is widely expected that the TSA will receive recommendations to enhance the fatally-flawed known shipper program (it should be called an unknown cargo program); increase the number of cargo packages loaded onto passenger planes; reduce the number of days required to make unknown shippers into known shippers; and even allow unknown shippers to ship cargo on passenger planes.

The known shipper program only guarantees that a shipper has completed some paperwork. It does not require an examination of the contents of what is being shipped. Pilots and flight attendants don't know what is in the cargo hold of the planes they fly; TSA doesn't know what is in the cargo hold (even if it is a person), and passengers certainly don't know what travels with them right underneath their feet.

What is more disturbing to me is the content and origin of the dissents offered by member of this advisory committee. The pilots associations, flight attendants, Victims of Pan Am Flight 103, and British Airways have all filed dissenting reports because this set of recommendations to the TSA represent little more than a fig leaf to cover the gaping loophole through which passengers are left vulnerable to terrorists using cargo shipping to take down another American airliner.

Make no mistake about it – terrorists still intend to target America's passenger planes. We have made a good effort and more still needs to be done to secure cockpit doors, inspect baggage and passengers, and employ more air marshals. However, the strongest cockpit door, with an armed pilot,

armed air marshals, and stripped down passengers will NOT prevent a terrorist from shipping a bomb without a boarding pass on any American passenger plane.

We've been told that the technology doesn't exist and that we just don't have enough money to screen and inspect cargo on passenger planes. Interestingly, those in the Bush Administration and some Congressional Republicans have found \$87 billion dollars to ensure Iraq's Homeland Security. Cargo screening would cost a fraction of this total we plan to send to Iraq (probably as much as it cost to implement the full 100% screening of baggage).

On the question of technology, it turns out that technology to screen cargo is used abroad in Israel; the Defense Department uses different types of technology to screen cargo on their planes; Logan Airport will begin a pilot program shortly to screen cargo on passenger planes using technology similar to the baggage screening technology currently in use at almost every airport in the U.S.; and there are literally dozens of companies who have developed or are developing technology using trace or explosive detection, x-rays, CT scan, and other advanced screening methods.

This box is no bigger than a common carry-on. How come we can screen passengers' carry-on bags, but cannot screen this piece of cargo put on the very same plane? As the TSA takes away travelers' nail-clippers, passengers are biting their nails, because no one inspects for bombs without boarding passes in the cargo hold of airplanes.

After September 11, there was a furious rush to make sure that a plane taking off from Logan, or any other airport, could never be used as a guided missile to assault the U.S. Capitol or any other building symbolic of American freedom and power and democracy. Only months after those two hijacked planes took off from Logan and hit the World Trade Towers, we mandated that all airport security would be federalized and 100% of all passengers' baggage would be screened for explosives and other tools of terror. Although many at the time argued 100% screening of baggage couldn't be done – we have largely been able to fill that mandate.

As each of us shows our boarding passes and ID's, and submits our carry-on and checked bags to vigorous hand and machine searches AND has an individual passenger profile based on the terrorism risk that we pose. We even take of our shoes and turn over our nail clippers to the TSA. But, right under our feet, air cargo is being loaded onto the same passenger planes.

This TSA program, an exercise in paperwork inspection, is more like an "unknown cargo" program, because it requires NO physical inspection of any box loaded onto any passenger plane in America. Ultimately, this unknown cargo program paves the way for bombs without boarding passes."

According to the General Accounting Office, approximately 22 percent of air cargo transported in the United States is carried aboard passenger planes.

More information can be found at [www.house.gov/markey](http://www.house.gov/markey).

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